BEGINNER

LEAD GUITAR 101

Wrenching Triple-String Oblique Bends

BY ANDY ELLIS

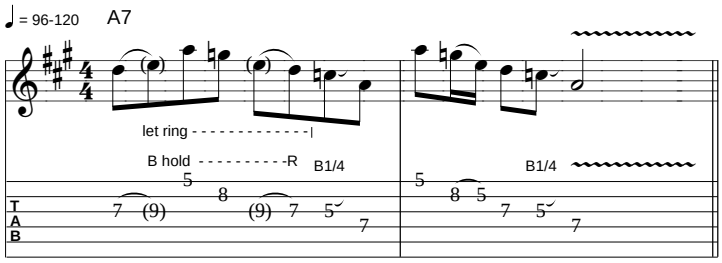
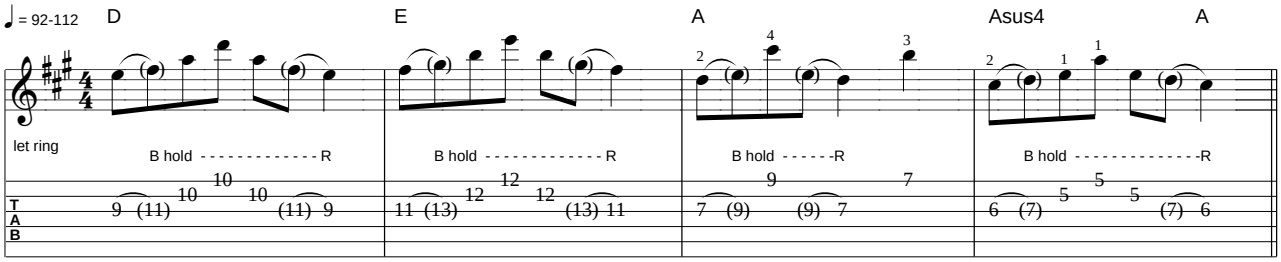
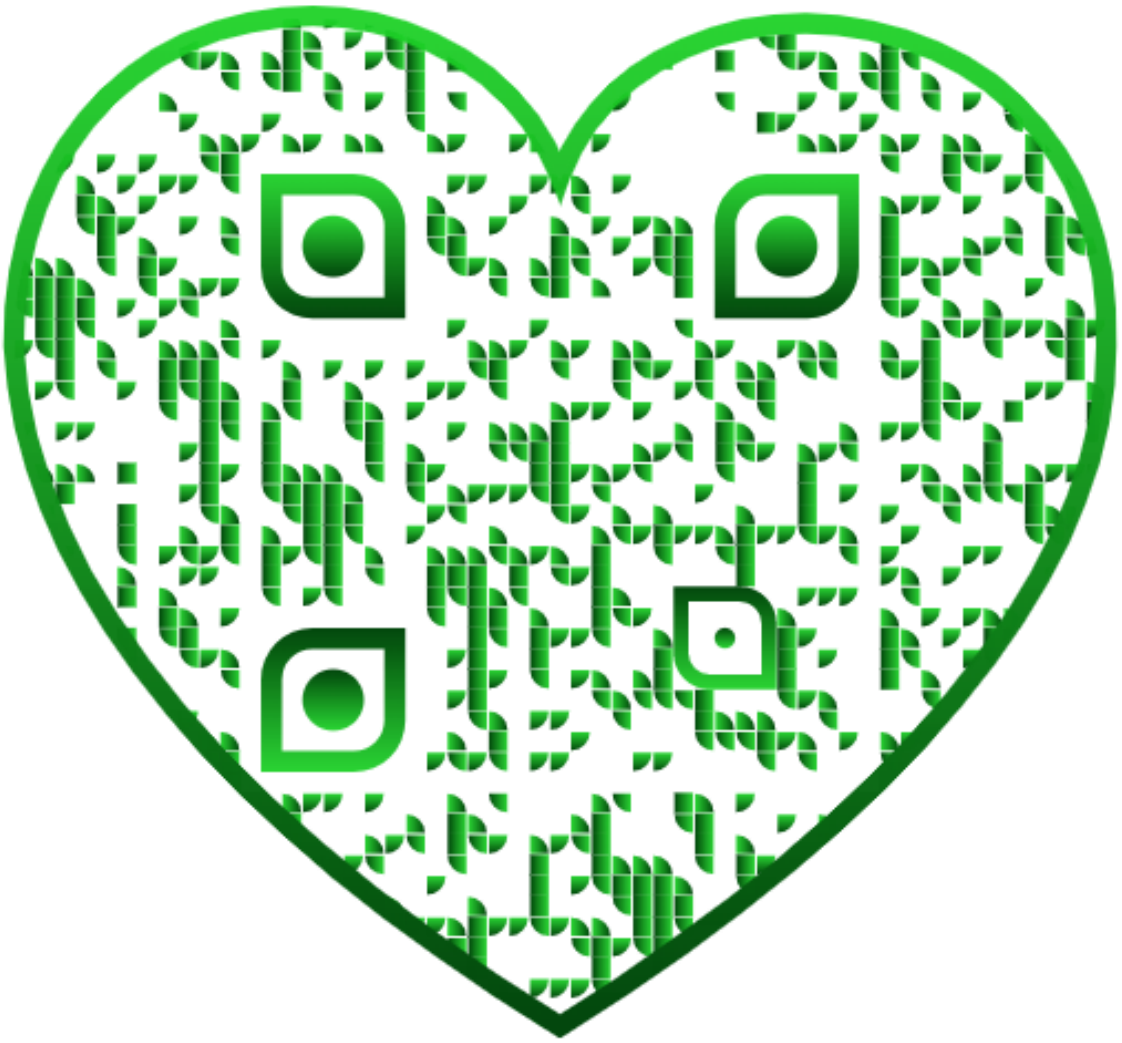
We tackled the double-string oblique bend in our previous Lead Guitar 101 (“Get a Grip on Two-String Oblique Bends,” April ’05). Now it’s time to take on its triple-string sibling. First, a quick refresher: In a typical oblique bend, you sustain one or two notes on high strings while bending another note on a lower string. You can pluck the high and low tones simultaneously or one after the other, and the bend can be virtually instantaneous or change pitch in rhythm. It takes a lot of practice to master this technique, but it’s worth it. When you lay down a righteous oblique bend, people take notice.

Played with a snarling attack and slightly gritty tone, Ex. 1 conjures Roy Buchanan, as well as Mick Taylor in the Sticky Fingers-era Rolling Stones (check out the jam in “Can’t You Hear Me Knocking”). The oblique bend happens in bar 1, beginning with a third string, whole-step stretch (beat one) that you hold while plucking notes on the first and second strings. The trick is to freeze the bend at its apex—steady now—as you navigate the other strings. By the time you reach beat three, you should hear the top three strings chiming together in a wicked major-second-on-minor-third cluster. Keep these strings ringing as you release the bend (beat three).

A honky tonk classic, Ex. 2 is lifted directly from pedal steel. In bars 1 and 2, hold the third string whole-step bend as you arpeggiate a major triad in beats two and three. Releasing the bend in beat four yields a restless pair of perfect fourths. Watch the fingering in bars 3 and 4; the goal is to keep each string ringing against the others as long as possible. Be sure to transpose the Asus4-to-A change to other keys, as this move makes a perfect ending to any country song.

Next time: More bending madness.

EX. 1



EX. 2